

*The Justice and Religion of
Magistrates,*

Considered in a

S E R M O N

Preached in the Parish-Church of

St. Mary, Nottingham,

BEFORE THE

MAYOR and ALDERMEN.

On Michaelmas Day 1724.

By JOHN DISNEY,
Vicar of the said Church.

*And published at the Request of some that
heard it.*

L O N D O N:

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2 SAM. xxiii. 3.

*He that ruleth over Men must be
just, ruling in the Fear of God.*



THESE are recorded as part of the last Words of *David King of Israel*; that great and excellent Magistrate, whom God (in mercy to his favourite People) had called and appointed to rule over them. They are said to be his last Words; *not* that he was then *dying*, (tho' he was indeed very *near* the end of his Life and Reign;) for there are other Speeches of his recorded afterwards, and some Transactions of *Government* too, which shew, that he was not upon his Death-bed when he delivered what I have read to you. But they are called his last Words, (as Bp. *Patrick* observes from *Abarbinel the Jew*,) because

they were the last he spake by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. After he had composed his Psalms by that Inspiration, and by the same had added to them that which is recited in the foregoing Chapter, then he spake these Words, and those that follow in the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Verses of *this* Chapter; after which, the Holy Spirit resided no more upon him in a prophetical way: And 'tis a noble Conclusion of his prophetical Character.

THE Maxim was given him (it should seem) at the beginning of his Reign, and by the Mouth of *Nathan* or *Samuel* (as is supposed) who were sent to deliver it to him: and the Divine Spirit reminded him again of it at the latter end of his Life, and made *Him* the Prophet to publish it, for the Use of all succeeding Magistrates, as what is absolutely necessary to the discharge of their Office, and to the benefit of the people that are governed by them. To see the stress that is laid upon it, observe the *august Pomp* and *Majesty* with which it is introduced, Ver. 1, 2, 3. Wherein, to make the stronger Impression upon the Minds of those for whose Use it was intended, he is moved to preface it with a very awful Sanction; from his own Character, as a *Prince*, who knew the Necessity of such a Government; and as

as a *Prophet*, divinely and immediately instructed now by God in what he had before been taught by his other Prophets. *David the Son of Jesse said; and the Man who was raised up on high,* (i. e. from a private Life to Royal Dignity,) *the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said; the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his Word was in my Tongue: the God of Israel said; the Rock of Israel spake to me: He that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the Fear of GOD.* What can be brought in with greater Majesty than this? What Words can require a deeper Attention, or imply a greater Importance?

THE Use I shall make of them at present, is as they relate to inferior Magistrates: for so undoubtedly they do, as well as to sovereign Princes; for the Maxim is general, and extends to all that are in any Magistratual Power; *He that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the Fear of God.*

THE Words yeild us two Considerations:

- I. THE Character and Duty of a good Magistrate, in respect of Justice; *He that ruleth over Men must be just.* And,
- II. THE religious principle that is to animate his whole Administration; *Ruling in the Fear of God.*

First,

First, THE Character and Duty of a good Magistrate in respect of *Justice*; [He that ruleth over Men must be just.] And that he may be so, 'tis fit he should consider, from whom he receives his Commission, and over whom he is to rule: for there is a Justice due to both. He has his Commission from God, and from his Prince. I say from God: for even subordinate Magistrates owe their Nomination to his Providence, and their Authority to his Institution, as the Author of all Government. Such were the Judges appointed by *Jehoshaphat King of Judah*, and yet he acknowledges they had their Commission ultimately from a greater Hand than his: *Take heed what ye do*, (says he in his Instructions to them;) for *ye judge not for Man* [i. e. not only for me and by my Authority,] *but for the Lord*, [and by his Authority,] *who is with you in the Judgment*. Wherefore, let the Fear of the Lord be upon you, 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7. And here you see the Consequence which I intended to draw from this Observation, that they have their Power from God, viz. they are not just to him, if they rule not in his Fear, and for his Service and Glory. But more of this under the second general Head.

THEY have their Commission also from their Prince; tho' nominated by popular Electi-

Election, or any other regular Way : for they are sworn to Him, and govern in his Name. Their Justice, in respect of this, is, to be faithful to him ; to the Honour of his Person, the Safety of his Throne, and the Peace of his Government. By this, it is incumbent upon 'em, if they be just to their Commission, to enquire into, and suppress all seditious Practices ; and to curb the Insolence of those that *are not afraid to speak evil of Dignities*, nor ashamed to vilify our glorious Sovereign, whom all Europe admires, and reverences, except some factious Spirits amongst our selves. 'Tis a Justice, which his Magistrates owe to his *Authority*, (the immediate Fountain of their own,) as well as to his excellent Character, to suffer none within their Jurisdiction to say any thing in Contempt of him, or any thing to alienate the Affection of his other Subjects from him ; or do any thing to disturb the legal *Course*, or weaken the *Power* of Government in his Hands.

But beside the Justice due to Him, whose Commission they bear, a Magistrate ought in justice also to consider *over whom* he is to rule ; the *Subjects* of his Magistratual Power. *He that ruleth over MEN must be just.* He is to consider them as *Men* ; in the same rank of Nature and Being, tho' not of outward Dignity and Power, with Himself ; and therefore, would be unjust

to

to treat them like Brute Beasts, which he may tyrannize over and enslave at Pleasure. They are to be used with Gentleness and Modesty ; and tho' guilty of an Offence, yet, where there is not a *Necessity* of Punishment, excused upon Submission, if softer Methods are likely to reclaim them. For a Magistrate is not to *triumph* in his Power, and to do hard things because he is *able* to do them : but to temper all his proceedings with as much Lenity as the Laws will bear, and with all the good nature that becomes a Man. And even in *punishing*, (where there *is* a Necessity for it,) there should be as much *Unwillingness* to inflict, and as much *Tenderness* in the Circumstances of it, as the Case will admit. The mildness of our legal *Constitution* here in *England*, is observable in this, that our Laws *admit* of no such thing as Racks and Tortures, no breaking on the Wheel, or other such barbarous Punishments as are used abroad : and so tender of punishing is the *Spirit* of our Nation in general, that Magistrates are rather apt to be *remiss*, and negligent *to a fault*, that they may *avoid* Severity : So that I need say no more of this. But to fence against both extremes, I shall endeavour to describe more largely, the Justice of a Magistrate toward those whom he is to govern, in these following particulars.

He

He that ruleth over Men must be just;
 (1.) In a diligent Execution of the *Laws* committed to him. The End of all Institutions of *Laws*, is the same which St. Paul makes the Reason of our praying for *Magistrates*; *1 Tim.* ii. 2. that we may live quiet and peaceable *Lives* in all Godliness and Honesty. It is the publick Good in the first Place; and so far as is consistent with that, the good of every particular Subject. I say, so far is consistent with that; because such particular Subjects as will be vicious and unquiet, and expose themselves thereby to the Punishment of Laws, (tho' no *Injustice* or *Injury* is done them by their Punishment,) must needs suffer a personal *Harm*: and so far the Law was not designed for their particular good; but for the publick and general good, which would be very ill consulted, (or rather totally overthrown,) if Punishments were not to be inflicted upon great and obstinate Offenders. And yet, (except in capital Punishments,) it is for their good too, in the moral Intention of the Law; to restrain or reclaim them from those Disorders that are likely to end in their *Ruin*, as well as to be troublesome and injurious to others. So that, upon the whole, Laws are for the good of every particular Subject, in as much as Religion and Virtue, Good Order, Peaceableness,

ableness, and Honesty, are the real *Interest* (as well as Duty) of every particular Person, with respect both to this and to another World. But their main view, (considered as Institutions political,) is the general and publick good of the whole Community: that Religion may be supported in the Veneration due to it; Good Order maintained in restraining all Acts of Violence or Sedition; and those Possessions which the Law has given a right to, may be preserv'd in Safety. Now the *Execution* of these Laws being committed to Magistrates, the Magistrate will be very unjust, both to his private Neighbourhood and the publick, if he be not very diligent in the Execution of them; since so much depends upon it. He is not just to the *Virtue* of his People, if he suffers ill Examples (unpunished) to corrupt them: He is not just to their *Piety*, if he suffers Profaneness (unpunish'd) to make religious Minds uneasy. He is not just to the *Safety* of his Country, if he suffers either Profaneness or *Vice* (by not being duly punished,) to draw down the Judgments of God upon it; or if he suffers feditious Practices to endanger, or any Violences to disquiet it. He is guilty of Injustice to every particular *Man* in his *Estate* or Possessions, if he does not use the Power that is given him by Law to punish or pre-

prevent all Cheating, Stealing, Robbery, and every sort of Dishonesty which the Laws extend to punish: nor is he just to him *otherwise*, if he does not his utmost to protect his Person and Reputation as far as the Law can do it; or if he suffers any Exactions or Extortions which the Law empowers him to restrain. In a Word; the Magistrate *himself* is guilty, (in point of Conscience,) of all that Wickedness that *infests*, and all that Injustice and Disorder that *disturbs* his Province, if he does not do his best to hinder and suppress it by that Power the Law has committed to him. However,

(2.) His Justice in executing Laws is to appear in as great a Care *not to overstrain* them. He *makes* a Law, instead of executing it, who goes in any respect beyond the Direction of those Laws that are to be his Guide. But surely the *making* of Laws is reserved to a superiour Authority; and 'tis as sure, that we have no such thing in *England* as *arbitrary* Punishments, nor arbitrary *Crimes* neither. There must be either Common, Statute, or Ecclesiastical Laws, to make any thing punishable: and the same Laws prescribe the Punishment; and prescribe the *Circumstances* also that shall infer the guilt which *exposes* a Man to Punishment. If any thing be punished which the Law

did not design to punish; or any Penalty be inflicted for a legal Offence, which the Law will not justify inflicting; or if the Circumstances to convict be neglected, or strained beyond the Intention of Law; there is an Injustice done: the person accused is *legally*, tho' perhaps not *really* innocent. Great Care, therefore, must be had, not to go too far under a pretended Zeal for Justice; but to take the Letter or Usage of the Law according to the real and equitable meaning of it, as near as can be apprehended. Not to bring Facts within it which were not intended by it: not to raise *Suspicions* only into *Proofs*, or dubious Circumstances into Evidence: not to swell the Fault beyond the legal Nature of it; nor the Punishment, either in kind or measure, beyond what the Law directs, or has been allowed by publick and ordinary Practices. This is certainly what Magistrates ought to make Conscience of, in Justice to those whom they rule over, and to the Law by which they rule.

(3.) This Justice implies a great *Abhorrence* of doing *wrong* in any respect whatsoever. I speak of it here, as a general and habitual Virtue *in disposition* which every Magistrate should have, (and every *Man* should have; but they especially who have most power and opportunities

nities for it, and most Temptations to the contrary, which is the Case of *Magistrates*;) to do right to every body, on all Accounts that lye in their Way; an universal Veneration for Justice, and Love of Equity, and Tenderness for Mankind: that all sides may be fairly heard, all Arguments on either side duly weighed; lest either the Accuser or accused should suffer by too hasty a Determination. To this a great deal of *Patience* will be required, and a great deal of *Mildness*, and an exact *Integrity*. What I mean by the last, is, under this Head, an Abhorrence of all *Temptations* to Injustice, and especially that of *Bribery*. It is required of 'em, *Exod.* xviii. 21. that they be *Men of Truth*, (i. e. Honesty,) hating *Covetousness*. And in *Deut.* xvi. 19. that they should not take a *Gift*; for a *Gift* does blind the *Eyes of the wise*, and pervert the *Words of the righteous*, i. e. the Defence or Plea of the innocent. And *Solomon* tells us, *Prov.* xxix. 4. *The King by Judgment stablisheth the Land*; but *He that receiveth Gifts overthroweth it*: as much as to say, The King's Laws tend to the *Good* and *Security* of the People; but the Magistrates that are to execute those Laws, if they take *Bribes*, *destroy* it. A good Magistrate, therefore, will abhor the *Thoughts* of *Bribery*, and all Offers and Advances, or
the

the least *Insinuations* towards it. And so he will whatever *else* may prejudice his Mind, or byass his Judgment, or precipitate the Determination he is to make; lest by any means of his, an Injustice should be done on any Side. For,

(4.) THE Justice of a Magistrate requires, that he should never be influenced by *Party*, *Friendship*, *Interest*, or *Resentment*, in any matters of Right or Justice whatsoever; to wink at the Crimes of some, and fall severe upon others; or deny to some any privilege the Laws allow, or give to others any advantage the Laws will *not* allow. Partiality is a terrible thing. For tho' the Bribery of *Mony* should be *out of* the Case; yet if that of their Passions or their Interests be *in* the Case, they must have *very* superior Virtue that *can* do Justice: because Self, and Humour, and private Inclination, will have a mighty Sway with all that have not sacrificed them (by a Holy Life) to God and Conscience.

But such a superior Virtue *ought* to be in every *Ruler over Men*, if he will be *just*, as the Text requires he should be. No *Resentments* ought to byass him: for if they do, 'tis *Malice*, and not Justice, that gives the Sentence; even tho' the Sentence happens to be materially *right*. If *Friendships* or *Affection* byass, it is a *Respect*

Respect of Persons, which we know the Scriptures utterly condemn ; and particularly in that Charge to Magistrates, Deut. i. 16, 17. *Judge righteously betwixt every Man and his Brother, and the STRANGER that is with him.* *Ye shall not respect Persons in Judgment.* Neither must any private Interest lead them : for if there is a fear of losing Advantages, or the Hopes of getting them, by the Judgment that may be given ; and if the Judgment is accordingly byassed by those Views ; it is the same thing as if *Mony* had been given, or those Advantages offered before hand ; which would be downright Bribery. And as Resentment, Friendship, or Interest, must have nothing to do, so neither must *Party* influence. Respect either to *Religious* or *Political Denominations* of Men, is as bad as Respect of *Persons*, to the perverting of Justice. It's true, that in distributing *Favours*, (where no Claim of *Right* is concerned,) a Magistrate, as well as other Men, may distinguish as he pleases : but *legal Rights*, and *legal Crimes* or *Offences*, are the same in all Men ; their being of one Party, or another, can never change the Merits of the Cause ; for *that* depends upon general and established Laws, which were made for *all* the Subjects, without regard to *Party* : nor ought it, therefore, to screen

any

any Man from Punishment that deserves it; nor become an Argument to discountenance or set aside the just Demands of any Man, let him be of what Opinion or political Interest he will. For Justice is due to all Men; and every just Magistrate will make it his Care in such matters to keep a perfectly even hand without distinction.

(5.) He that ruleth over Men must be just, and shew that he dares to be so, by a *resolute doing* what appears fit and just to be done, whatever the Consequence may be. The two former Heads related chiefly to his Conscience, or the inward Principle determining his Judgment; *this* more especially to his *Courage*, in doing what conscientious Judgment tells him should be done. And great need there is of Steadiness and Courage, when he is to expose himself to the Censures of *ignorant* Men, or the Revenges of *ill* Men, or the Frowns of *Great* Men, in discharging his Duty. All these are to be expected in one Case or another: for tho' a Determination be ever so equitable, or a Punishment ever so just, those that are interested to the contrary, or Favourers of those that are, will be apt to think it otherwise: and how much Malice may follow, where there is *Power* for Mischief; or at least, how much ill-natured

natured Reflexion and ill-will, where there is no other Power; Experience has often shewn. But all this must not terrify a Magistrate. Having settled in his Judgment, by legal and equitable Rules, what ought to be done, He has no farther Consideration than to give order that it be done: Resolution must bear him up against all Consequences. Perhaps some Persons of *Figure* and *Distinction* interest themselves in the matter, and are disengaged by it; and the Effects of their Resentment may be dangerous: but what is this to a good Magistrate? He knows his Sentence is *just*, and he will stand to it: for his Regard to Justice is, and ought to be, greater than his Regard to them, or to his own Dependance upon them. Perhaps a tumultuous disorderly *Populace* may be inflamed, and with their usual ill Manners, may insult him for it, or in their giddy Rage do worse; as it has sometimes happened, where either the *Crime* is become popular, or the *Criminal*: but this will not move a just and gallant Magistrate; the Laws shall take their Course while they are in his Administration, in spite of all the Madness of the People. But if none of these things happen, yet the strictest Regard to Justice will perhaps be misinterpreted by many, and Censures and Reflexions will be thrown upon

him with great Freedom; not only by the Sufferer's Malice, or his Friends, but by the factious Humour of some, who are got into a Way of disliking every thing their Magistrates do; or by the Ignorance of others, that will be always judging of things which they don't understand the Reasons of: but a wise and just Magistrate will *not value* such Discouragements. He governs himself by the Nature and Reason of things, and the inflexible Rules of Justice: not by the uncertain and humorous Notions of a Mob; nor by the confused and inconsiderate Judgment of any body else that may censure him.

And thus I have represented to you, in several Particulars, the Character of a good Magistrate with respect to the first Clause in our Text, *He that ruleth over Men must be JUST.* Let us now go on to the Second General Head.

II. THE *Religious* Principle that is to animate his whole Administration, [*ruling in the fear of God.*] We had the moral Principle before, in the Character of Justice: but here, *Religion* is introduced, as the most awful Reason why he *should*, and the best Security that he *will* be just, and a Direction to him also to extend his Care in the Execution of Justice to promote Religion and Virtue. And indeed,

deed, where Religion *does not* influence the Magistrate in both respects, (both as a Reason of what he *does*, and a Direction of what he *should do*,) Justice will be but lamely executed, and by halves; nor will the moral Virtue, how agreeable soever to the Reasonings of Nature and Conscience, have strength enough to supply the World with *many* Instances, of such as will be uniformly just *for the sake of Justice*. There must be a farther and a stronger Principle to do this; which is Religion, or *the Fear of God*.

But when may they be said to rule in *the Fear of God*?

I answer :

(1.) When, considering themselves as ruling *for God*, and deputed under him, they guide themselves by it as a Maxim, in all their Administration of Justice, to act as they think God himself would act, *for whom* they govern. *Jehoshaphat's Charge to his Judges*, 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7. (which I cited in part before,) runs thus : *Take heed what ye do : for ye judge not for Man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the Judgment.* Wherefore now let *the Fear of the Lord* be upon you ; take heed and do it : for there is no Iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of Persons, nor taking of Gifts. As much as to say : “*Tho' your Commission runs in my*

" Name, your *Authority* is from *God*, the
 " Sovereign and essential Justice, who is
 " present with you in all your Courts of
 " Judicature. To him you must be ac-
 " countable in a severer manner than you
 " can to *me*. And therefore, let the Fear
 " of God be upon you; consider your
 " selves as *his* Deputies, to distribute
 " Justice to this People; and as such,
 " let *Him* be the Pattern of your *Con-*
 " *du&t*, who is the Fountain of your
 " Power. There is no Iniquity with
 " *Him*; take care that there be none
 " with *you*. The Great God is neither to
 " be *awed* nor *bribed* to any Injustice;
 " and it becomes *you* that are to judge
 " for *him*, therefore, to fear none but
 " *Him*, and to admit of no Corruption."

This is plainly the Sense of that excel-
 lent Charge of *Jebo&habat* to his Judges.
 And it appears thereby, that the *Fear of*
God, which Magistrates should have, with
 respect to their Office, (as judging in *his*
 Stead, and being accountable to *Him*,)
 consists in judging according to the *mind*
 of *God*, as far they have any Light to
 apprehend it; and according to the *Ex-*
ample of *God*, as close as they are able
 to come up to it. And if this be the
 Case; tho' only Uncorruptness and Im-
 partiality in Justice is mentioned, that
 mixture of *Mercy* along with it which is
 in

in God, must be included ; such a *Tenderness* to Offenders, as I described in the Beginning of this Discourse. Such, certainly, is the Temperature of *Divine Justice* ; and so it will be of *humane*, if Magistrates rule in the Fear of God ; i. e. if they either fear him, in a Way of Veneration and Reverence of his *Perfections*, or in a dread of his *Resentments* of their acting unlike and contrary to him.

(2.) They are said to rule in the Fear of God, when they have a due Regard to the Oath of God that is upon them. The Reverence of an Oath, as it is the strongest Ligament of Society, so it is also one of the most necessary Characters of Religion ; there can be no Religion without it. For what is that promissory Oath, which all Magistrates and Officers of Justice take, but the Security they give for the faithful Discharge of their Trust, by calling God to witness their sincere Intentions so to discharge it ; and binding over themselves to the Judgments and eternal Vengeance of God, if they do not that impartial Justice which they promise ? Surely, those who take such Oaths, and never think of them more, do either not believe a God, or not *regard* him : if that be the Case, they're Atheists ; and if this, they're impi-

impious; they have no Fear of God before their Eyes. But a good Magistrate will, in all his Proceedings, have an *Awe* and *Dread* upon his Mind from so severe an Obligation. It will be always sounding in his Ears. He will be afraid of making one Step in any thing contrary to it; afraid of so much as *looking upon* any Temptation to break thro' it: because he fears God, who (he very well knows) observes him, and whom he purposely invoked to be the Witness of his Conduct, and the Avenger of all wilful Injustice in it. He knows, that tho' the Prince may be often ignorant of the Iniquity or the Cruelty of those whom he employs in the Administration of Justice; their *God* (by whose Name they were *sworn* to a just Administration,) sees every Step they take, and all the workings of their Passions, and all the secret Springs that move them, as well as the publick Issue of their Sentence. Thus then will the Conscience of a Magistrate that fears God continually argue with him upon this Topick. "What! can I imagine, the Great God of Heaven, that infinite and eternal Memory, has forgot the Oath I swore by him? Or can I imagine, if I should act unrighteously in this Cause, or to this Man, on any Account, and by any Art or

" Ma-

" Management whatsoever, that God will
 " deny me that Vengeance, which I so-
 " lemnly *desired* him to lay up for me
 " if I should? Can I suppose, he will
 " suffer his own awful Majesty to be af-
 " fronted, his own Power and Justice
 " defied, and this Man (who is under
 " his Protection) injured by my Perjury,
 " and sit tamely down *for ever* without
 " vindicating both Himself and Him?"
 It's true, the Vengeance of Heaven is ge-
 nerally *slow* in striking; but it is *sure*,
 and so much the more *weighty*, when it
 does strike. There is many a perjured
 Evidence, and many a forsworn Magis-
 trate, that goes on with Ease and out-
 ward Prosperity under his Guilt, and God
 seems to take no notice of him: but
 he certainly will at length, either by
 some severe Judgment in *this* World, or
 eternal Punishment in the next. And
 this, even *Heathen* Consciences were aware
 of; *Euripides*^a, and *Plutarch*^b, and
Horace^c, and *Juvenal*^d; and *Valerius*
Maxi-

^a *Euripid.* Trag. incertæ v. 6, 7. Edit. Barnes. T. 2. p.
 505. vid. etiam in *Hecuba* v. 1029, 1030. Item, *Antiope*,
 v. 31, &c. &c in *Phrixo*, v. 7, &c.

^b *Plutarch*, *ωεὶ τὸ Θεῖον βερδέως πυρσεύειν*.

^c *Horace*, Carm. L. 3. Ode 2.

^d *Juvenal*, Sat. 13. v. 100.

Maximus, whose Observation is worth our while to repeat: *Lento enim gradu* (says he) *ad vindictam sui Divina procedit Ira; tarditatemque supplicii gravitate compensat.* “The Wrath of God proceeds but slowly to avenge himself; and makes up at length for the Slowness, by the Severity of the Punishment.”

But (3.) and lastly, Magistrates are said to rule in the Fear of God, where they endeavour to *promote* the Fear of God, and to suppress whatever is contrary to it among the People. I am not now to *prove*, that Magistracy invests Men with a Power (and consequently lays upon them an Obligation) to look after this, as well as the Quiet of the State, and the secular Rights and Safety of those whom they govern; that their Authority is concerned to keep up the outward Reverence due to God and Religion, as well as that which is owing to the Prince and to the Laws; and that they should preserve Sobriety and Chastity, no less than Peace and Honesty. I take this for granted; and indeed the Laws committed to them make it undeniable. But what I aim

^e *Val. Max. L. 1. c. 1. prope finem. Vid. etiam Tibullus L. 1. Eleg. 9. (vel. 10.)*

aim at here, is to shew, that ruling in the Fear of God implies a hearty and particular *Zeal* in this part of their Office: Wherever a Principle of Religion is imbibed in serious Earnest, it enters so deep into the Affections, that the Soul can never be easy with any thing that is said or done *against* Religion; but will exert its self, some Way or other, in Abhorrence and Opposition to what is contrary to the Principle its self is influenced by: An Example of this we have in righteous *Lot*. He had, indeed, no Power to *punish* or *suppress* the Sins of *Sodom* where he lived: but his Righteousness made it a *Grief* to him every Day, to see them practised and *unpunished*; and, no doubt, had he been a Magistrate, he would have made that vicious People know that he could do *more* than grieve at them. Every good *Man* will be *shocked* at Blasphemy and Profaneness: because himself fears God; and abhors to hear that Being so insulted, which he knows deserves the deepest Veneration. He will be *offended* at Lewdness and Debauchery: because it dishonours God, when those who profess to own him, do in their Works deny him, and live in Courses that are forbidden by him. But this is not all that a Good *Magistrate* has to say to them: the Reverence he has for God, join'd with

the Power he has from God to punish Impiety and Vice by the Laws of his Country, will fire him into an *active* Indignation against such Offenders. He knows he has Power, and he will be sure to use it, that the Name of God may *not* be profaned, nor Religion insulted, nor the publick Worship of God neglected, nor Debauchery and Lewdness trample upon the *Authority* of God: and tho' he cannot make other Men to fear God in earnest, as *He* does, yet (so far as he can hinder,) he will not suffer them to dishonour God, and to speak and act as if they feared him *not*.

AND thus I have endeavoured to shew the Extent and Meaning of our Text, in both the Clauses of it: *He that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the Fear of God.* I hope the Reason of the thing appeared in every Particular as I went along: and what can I say farther to perswade a due regard to it; if the natural Principle of Justice, the secret Awe of Conscience, the Love that is due to our Country, the Reverence of an Oath, and the Dread of that divine and infinite Vengeance, which will pursue the unjust, are not enough to move us? But if I could say more; or could enlarge upon these Arguments mention'd, with all the Art and Eloquence that might tend to make

make them effectual ; I hope there would be no occasion for it in this Audience. And therefore, humbly recommending you to the Grace of God, for the Discharge of that great Trust he has employ'd you in, I shall encroach no longer upon your Patience,

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one Sovereign and Eternal Majesty, the Fountain of all Power, and the Judge of those whom he has invested with it, be all Honour and Glory for ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

